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A New Day in the Old Dominion

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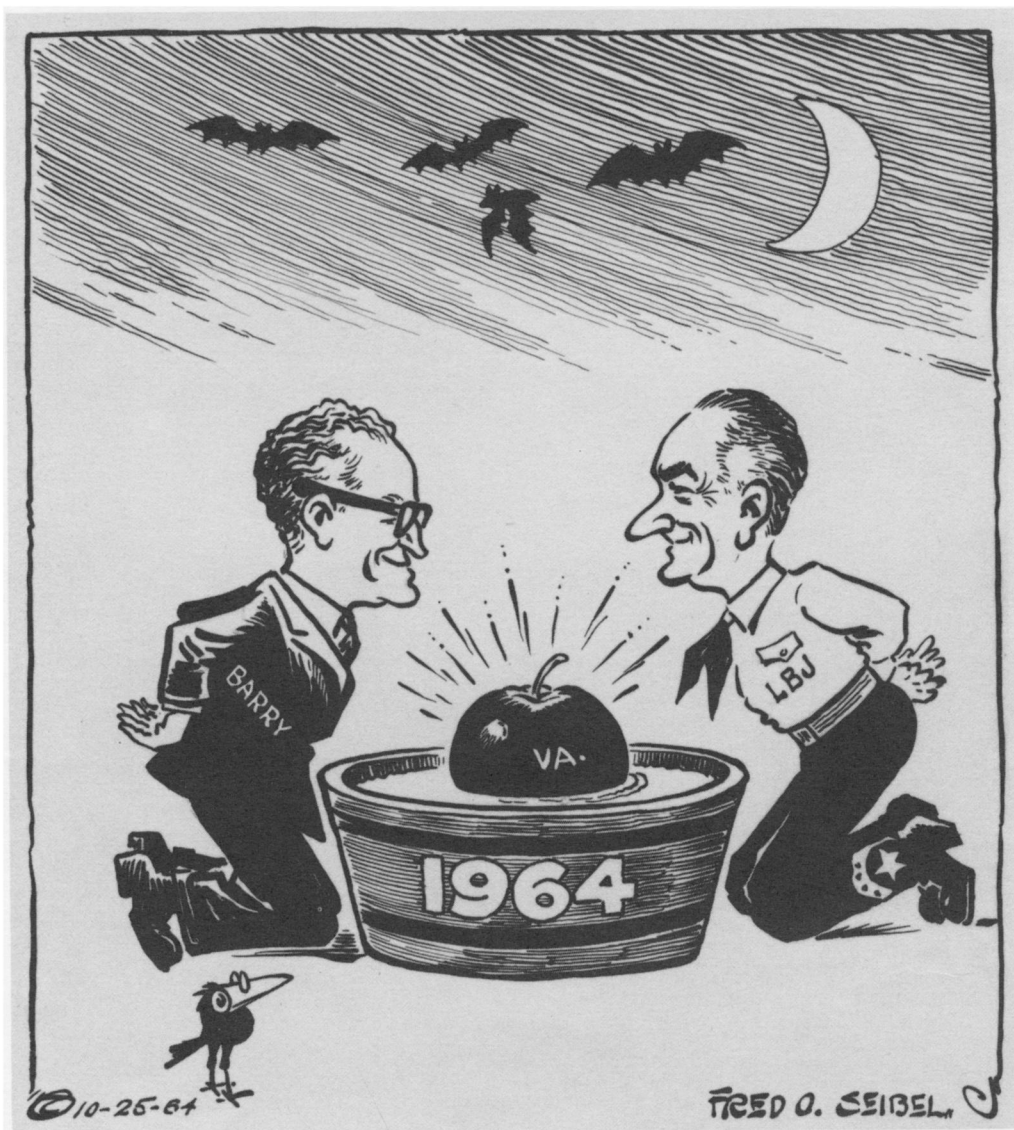
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By mid-October 1964, the political tide in Virginia had turned from Arizona senator Barry M. Goldwater to incumbent president Lyndon B. Johnson. Fred O. Seibel's cartoon "Who'll Get the Apple?" appeared in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* on 25 October.

A NEW DAY IN THE OLD DOMINION

The 1964 Presidential Election

by JAMES R. SWEENEY*

THE 1964 presidential campaign marked a significant turning point in Virginia politics. The election coincided with major changes in the state's political culture. The ratification of the Twenty-fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution in January 1964 removed the poll tax as a prerequisite for voting in federal elections.¹ That tax had been one of the principal weapons of control wielded by the long-dominant Organization of conservative Democrat Harry F. Byrd, Sr. The senator and his allies attempted to circumvent the amendment by having the General Assembly enact a substitute for the poll tax in late 1963, but a federal court declared this certificate of residence unconstitutional.²

As a result, Virginia's electorate expanded rapidly. On the one hand, black political organizations, inspired by the civil rights movement and the vibrant young president, John F. Kennedy, launched voter registration drives. On the other hand, many suburbanites, newcomers to the state, and recent college graduates were attracted to the Republican party. A new day was dawning in Virginia politics. In 1963 Governor Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., foresaw a time of change. "In my opinion," he wrote Harry Byrd, "1964 is going to be a rather eventful year in Virginia in many ways."³

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¹ The Twenty-fourth Amendment became part of the Constitution when South Dakota became the thirty-eighth state to ratify it. See *New York Times*, 24 Jan. 1964, p. 1, col. 6.

² The certificate of residence would have required prospective voters who did not pay their poll tax to file a certificate with the treasurer of their city or county six months before each federal election. The court ruled that such a requirement placed an undue burden on voters in federal elections that did not apply to voters in elections for the Virginia House of Delegates. See James Latimer, "U.S. Court Abolishes State Vote Certificates," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 31 May 1964, p. 1.

³ Richard B. Morris, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History* (6th ed.; New York, 1982), p. 529; Allen W. Moger, *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925* (Charlottesville, 1968), pp. 181-202; J. Harvie Wilkinson III, *Harry Byrd and the Changing Face of Virginia Politics, 1945-1966* (Charlottesville, 1968), pp. 182-86, 231-34; Ralph Eisenberg, "Virginia: The Emergence of Two-Party Politics," in William C. Havard, ed., *The Changing Politics of the South* (Baton Rouge, 1972), pp. 60-63; Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 29 Aug. 1963, Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., Executive Papers, 1962-63, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond.

Harry Byrd, Sr., had not actively supported a Democratic presidential candidate since Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936. In October 1952 Byrd announced on statewide radio that he could not "in good conscience" endorse the Democratic ticket of Adlai Stevenson and John Sparkman. Byrd's speech was regarded as influential in helping Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower carry the commonwealth. Byrd reverted to complete silence in 1956. Four years later at his apple orchard picnic at Berryville, he declared, "I have found at times that silence is golden." Behind the scenes, however, Byrd was working to assist the Republican nominee, Vice-President Richard M. Nixon. For the third consecutive presidential election, Virginia's electoral votes went to the Republican candidate. This trend troubled state Democratic officeholders, who feared that Virginians might grow accustomed to voting Republican. In 1962 GOP candidates won 49.5 percent of the vote in the six contested congressional races. Republican Richard Poff was reelected in the Roanoke area and Joel Broyhill in Northern Virginia. In Richmond, Lewis Williams, a young obstetrician, came within 343 votes of defeating incumbent Democrat J. Vaughan Gary, while in the Shenandoah Valley, J. Kenneth Robinson, an orchardist, fell 598 votes short of victory. Republicans also made notable gains in the 1963 elections for the General Assembly.⁴

Another reason for the increasing popularity of Republican candidates in Virginia was the policies of the Kennedy administration. In October 1963 Congressman Thomas N. Downing of the Newport News area wrote Democratic National Chairman John M. Bailey that "my people are opposed to civil rights programs, area redevelopment, the National Service Corps, medical care." He also stressed that federal spending programs and foreign aid were "unpopular issues." In August Governor Harrison had stated that if the election were held then, Senator Barry M. Goldwater of Arizona would carry Virginia if he were the Republican nominee. James Jackson Kilpatrick of the *Richmond News Leader* agreed. "Up to the moment of the President's death," the editor wrote, "I felt certain that . . . in a Goldwater-Kennedy race, Mr. Goldwater would have carried the State overwhelmingly." The assassination of President Kennedy and the succession of Vice-President

⁴ Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd*, pp. 83–86; James R. Sweeney, "Revolt in Virginia: Harry Byrd and the 1952 Presidential Election," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 86 (1978): 180–95; James R. Sweeney, "Whispers in the Golden Silence: Harry F. Byrd, Sr., John F. Kennedy, and Virginia Democrats in the 1960 Presidential Election," *ibid.* 99 (1991): 3–44; Frank B. Atkinson, *The Dynamic Dominion: Realignment and the Rise of Virginia's Republican Party Since 1945* (Fairfax, Va., 1992), pp. 123–24; James W. Ely, Jr., *The Crisis of Conservative Virginia: The Byrd Organization and the Politics of Massive Resistance* (Knoxville, 1976), p. 169.



*Harry F. Byrd, Sr., Papers (#9700), Manuscripts Division,
Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library*

"I have served in the Senate for 32 years—under Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson," wrote Harry F. Byrd, Sr., in January 1965. "I have had a personal friendship with all of them but this friendship has never influenced my vote." Byrd sat to the left of the podium when Lyndon B. Johnson addressed the *Reader's Digest* dinner on 2 April 1963.

Lyndon B. Johnson, however, required a reassessment of the political situation in the Old Dominion.⁵

As colleagues in the Senate, Harry Byrd and Lyndon Johnson enjoyed a cordial relationship.⁶ In 1960 Byrd used his considerable

⁵ Thomas N. Downing to John M. Bailey, 8 Oct. 1963, Files of the Democratic National Committee, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as TxU-J); *Washington Post*, 23 Aug. 1963, p. A2; James J. Kilpatrick to Barbara A. Bernhard, 8 Jan. 1964, James J. Kilpatrick Papers (#6626-b), University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville (hereafter cited as ViU); Ozzie Osborne, "JFK Death May Hit State GOP Where It Hurts—At Polls," *Roanoke World-News*, 28 Nov. 1963, p. 33.

⁶ Box 245 of the Harry F. Byrd, Sr., Papers (#9700) at the University of Virginia contains

influence to secure instructions from the Democratic state convention that bound the Virginia delegation to Johnson as long as his name remained before the national convention. Johnson's nomination for the vice-presidency on the ticket with Kennedy, however, did not impress Byrd. The Virginian refused the Texan's personal appeal for support after the convention. Although the warm relationship between the two men continued after Johnson became president, Byrd did not let it affect his views. "I have served in the Senate for 32 years—under Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson," he wrote in 1965. "I have had a personal friendship with all of them but this friendship has never influenced my vote."⁷

Johnson's decision to back the Kennedy legislative program did not please Byrd. An opponent of deficit spending since the New Deal, the Virginian had not supported Kennedy's plan to stimulate the economy through tax cuts. To appease Byrd, who served as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Johnson decreed that the new budget must be kept under \$100 billion. He also assured the Virginia senator that "he would do everything possible to reduce expenditures still further." Although Byrd could not vote for the tax cut, he did not obstruct the bill by holding it in the Finance Committee. In the months after the measure passed, however, he was "gravely disappointed" that there were no further reductions in expenditures. He also disliked "the so-called Anti-Poverty bill," which he regarded as "a long step toward the welfare state." In addition, he pledged to "oppose any weakening of our immigration laws" and "to fight . . . to the bitter end" against the "iniquitous" civil rights bill.⁸

Given Byrd's views on the Johnson program and his devotion to principles over party loyalty, it is inconceivable that he could have

numerous letters from the period 1957–59 in which Johnson, the Democratic majority leader in the United States Senate, praised Byrd for his dedicated service.

⁷ George M. Kelley, "Virginia's Delegation Promised to Johnson," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 22 May 1960, p. 1-A; James Latimer, "State Votes Are Pledged To Johnson," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 May 1960, p. 1; James Latimer, "Byrd-Like Footprints Left In Virginia's Political Sands," *ibid.*, 23 May 1960, p. 1; *New York Times*, 6 Dec. 1960, p. 40, col. 4; Lyndon B. Johnson to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 10 Feb. 1964, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to Lyndon B. Johnson, 8 Sept. 1964, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to Donald G. Brownlow, 20 Jan. 1965, Byrd Papers.

⁸ Vaughn Davis Bornet, *The Presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson*, American Presidency Series (Lawrence, Manhattan, and Wichita, 1983), p. 45; Jim F. Heath, *Decade of Disillusionment: The Kennedy-Johnson Years* (Bloomington, 1975), pp. 149, 169–70; Hubert H. Humphrey, *The Education of a Public Man: My Life and Politics* (Garden City, N.Y., 1976), pp. 290–93; interview with Harry F. Byrd, Jr., 3 Feb. 1983, Winchester, Va.; Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to Peter A. G. Brown, 10 Jan. 1964, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to K. V. Hoffman, 14 Jan. 1964, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to Mrs. L. B. Fox, 22 July 1964, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to J. S. Gregory, 13 Aug. 1964, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to Florence H. Harrill, 19 Aug. 1964, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to L. H. Bowen, 22 Apr. 1964, Byrd Papers.



A fiscal conservative and life-long proponent of pay-as-you-go policies, Byrd was “gravely disappointed” that Johnson did not fulfill his promise to reduce expenditures and disliked “the so-called Anti-Poverty bill,” which he regarded as “a long step toward the welfare state.”

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endorsed Johnson’s reelection. Early in 1964, political analysts in Virginia speculated whether Byrd at age seventy-seven would run again for the Senate and whether he would support Johnson in the fall. Byrd resolved the first question when he announced on 14 March that he would seek reelection to the seat he had held since 1933. Whether the Republican party would nominate an opponent for the first time since 1946 was not known.⁹

Virginia Republicans were deeply divided over the question of opposing Byrd. Some conservatives were not only ideologically close to the senator but also believed that nominating an opponent would rally the Democrats, including Byrd, behind the entire Democratic ticket. The result could be loss of the state by the Republican presidential nominee and the defeat of congressmen Broyhill and Poff. This fear was especially

⁹ James Latimer, “Byrd-Watchers Debate Two Theories,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 9 Feb. 1964, p. 1; Luther J. Carter, “Will Byrd Break ‘Golden Silence’ in ‘64?” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 5 Jan. 1964, p. B-3; Luther J. Carter, “Sen. Byrd Is Silent, Smiling,” *ibid.*, 1 Mar. 1964, p. B-3; James Latimer, “Senator Byrd Will Run For Re-election,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 15 Mar. 1964, p. 1.

prevalent among fervent supporters of Goldwater. Many Republicans, however, especially in western Virginia and among the party's younger members, believed that someone must run against Byrd. If Virginia were ever to have a two-party system on the state level and if the Republicans were to fulfill their responsibilities, they believed that a candidate for the Senate must be nominated in 1964.¹⁰

The Republican state convention met in Richmond on 13 June. After instructing their delegation to the national convention for Goldwater, the Republicans struggled nearly six hours over the question of nominating someone to oppose Byrd. A motion to table the nomination failed on a roll call vote. No candidate, however, received the required majority. After more wrangling, the convention adopted a motion to refer the matter to the State Central Committee. George M. Kelley wrote in the Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot* that the convention was "one of the greatest displays of political frustration ever staged in public." He believed "it would be a miracle if a candidate should be fielded by the State Central Committee." That the miracle occurred was undoubtedly a result of the efforts of the new state chairman, Robert J. Corber of Arlington. Corber believed that the convention majority had clearly wanted to nominate a candidate, and he pledged "a good faith effort" to bring about that result. At the committee meeting on 27 June, twenty-four of the fifty-five members present indicated their opposition to selecting a nominee by abstaining. The majority of the committee, however, chose Richard A. May of Gloucester County on the third ballot. May, a sixty-eight-year-old retired businessman and diplomat, was a cattle breeder on a 200-acre estate at Dragon Ordinary and was active in local Republican politics.¹¹

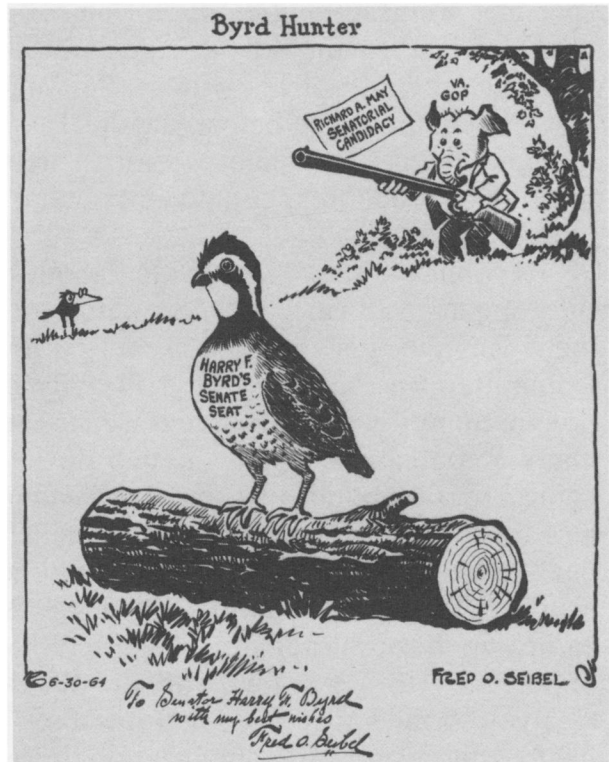
The Byrd-May "campaign" was one of the most bizarre United States Senate races in the twentieth century.¹² When he announced his

¹⁰ Atkinson, *Dynamic Dominion*, pp. 134–36; George M. Kelley, "The GOP Stands Mute," Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, 24 May 1964, p. B-5; *ibid.*, 8 June 1964, p. 2.

¹¹ James Latimer, "Virginia GOP Awards Goldwater 10 Delegates," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 14 June 1964, p. 1; George M. Kelley, "GOP Fails to Pick Byrd Foe," Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, 14 June 1964, p. 1; George M. Kelley, "Trial Balloons Up," *ibid.*, p. B-5; James Latimer, "GOP Chief Promises 'Good Faith' Effort," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 15 June 1964, p. 1; James Latimer, "Virginia GOP Chooses May As Byrd Foe," *ibid.*, 28 June 1964, p. 1. May had a résumé filled with significant accomplishments. A graduate of Harvard University, he had served as a vice-president of General Motors' Overseas Operation before World War II and had worked with General Douglas MacArthur in the postwar economic rehabilitation of Japan. For biographical material on May, see the folder "1964" in the archives of the Republican party of Virginia, Obenshain Center, Richmond. See also *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 28 June 1964, p. 1; Carl Shires, "Versatile May Believes Byrd Can Be Beaten," *Richmond News Leader*, 21 Oct. 1964, p. 7.

¹² In addition to May, five candidates ran as independents against Byrd. The only one to receive a significant number of votes was James W. Respass of Alexandria, a legislative analyst

Although Republicans were deeply divided over whether to nominate someone to oppose Harry Byrd in 1964, the party's State Central Committee chose Richard A. May of Gloucester as its "Byrd Hunter" on 27 June.



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candidacy, Byrd declared, "My platform will be my record of nearly 50 years in public service." In mid-August he reiterated that statement at his forty-second annual apple orchard picnic. Wearing a white double-breasted suit and speaking from an improvised platform on the rear of a yellow flatbed truck, the courtly Virginian outlined his philosophy of government. He also issued a withering critique of Johnson's domestic policies without mentioning the president by name. On 4 September Byrd welcomed the support of the State Democratic Headquarters and the newly formed Democrats for Goldwater-Byrd. He made no campaign

for the National Education Association and an attorney specializing in tax law. Respass described himself as an Independent Lyndon Johnson Democrat who supported the tax cut, antipoverty legislation, and the Civil Rights Act. He received 95,526 votes, 10.3 percent of the total. See William Chapman, "Seven Vie For Senate in Va.," *Washington Post*, 13 Sept. 1964, p. N7; biographical data on the candidates in the League of Women Voters of Virginia questionnaire attached to Mrs. J. A. Kessler, Jr., to Meda Dick, 18 Sept. 1964, Byrd Papers; *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, Peninsula Edition, 31 Oct. 1964, p. 2; Ralph Eisenberg, *Virginia Votes, 1924-1968* (Charlottesville, 1971), pp. 241-44.

speeches, refused invitations to Democratic rallies across the state, and even declined to answer the request of a reporter for an interview. The unexpected death of his wife on 25 August was a serious blow to the elderly senator. Even before she died, however, Byrd had written, "My thought now is that I should make a quiet campaign." He authorized the printing of brochures, contacted political allies in the Organization, and ignored May.¹³

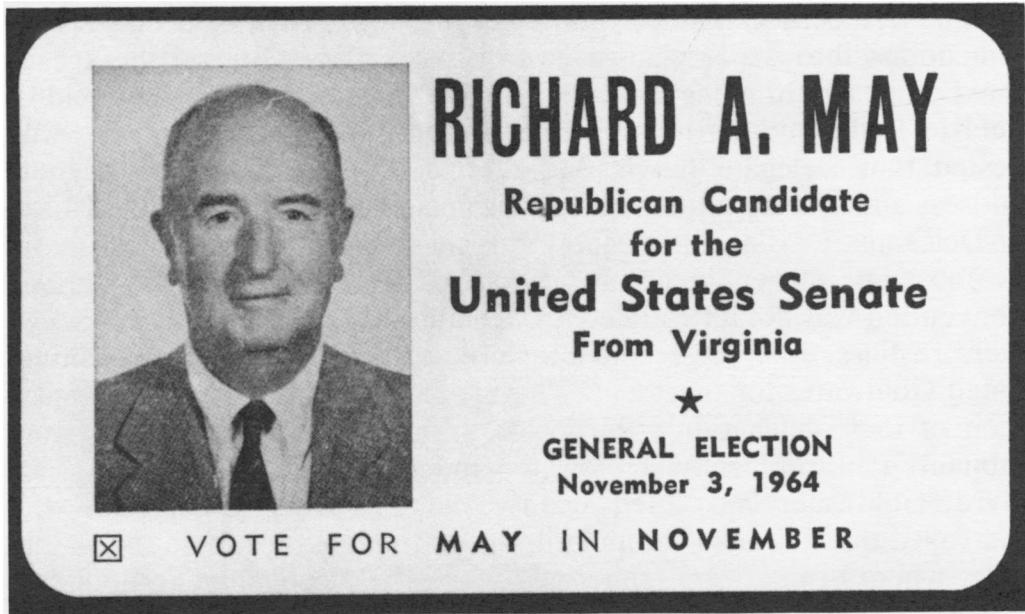
Republicans remained divided about the May candidacy throughout the campaign. In early July an angry Joel Broyhill reported that "prominent Republicans" were considering a suit against the State Central Committee on grounds that it illegally changed its rules to make the nomination possible.¹⁴ In a few weeks the threat of a suit was dropped; many Republicans, however, had no intention of supporting May. In some areas Republican campaign headquarters worked for Goldwater and the congressional nominee but failed to mention May. Above all, party officials hoped to keep Byrd on the sidelines rather than leading a united Democratic effort. When the Republicans opened their state campaign headquarters in Richmond, May was not even given the opportunity to say a few words. Political writer George Kelley accurately described May as "The Lonesome End" of Virginia politics. As a final insult, a statewide organization of Republicans for Byrd, headed by Lewis L. Strauss, former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, was announced in early October.¹⁵

May became so frustrated that he threatened to quit the race. On 26 August he wrote Republican congressional candidates and state and local party leaders demanding to know what support he could expect. If

¹³ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 15 Mar. 1964, p. 1; Harry F. Byrd, Sr., remarks delivered at apple orchard picnic, 15 Aug. 1964, Byrd Papers; James Latimer, "Byrd Keeps Campaign 'Silence,'" *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 16 Aug. 1964, p. 1; Luther J. Carter, "An Oracle, A Picnic, And a Puzzle," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 23 Aug. 1964, p. B-3; William Chapman, "Byrd Welcomes 'Barry Faction,'" *Washington Post*, 4 Sept. 1964, p. B-1; *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, Home Edition, 28 Nov. 1964, p. 12; Carl Shires (of the *Richmond News Leader*) to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 17 Sept. 1964, Byrd Papers; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 26 Aug. 1964, p. 1; Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to Earl A. Fitzpatrick, 5 Aug. 1964, Byrd Papers; Watkins M. Abbutt to Garland Gray, 23 Sept. 1964, Watkins M. Abbutt Papers, University of Richmond Library; Thomas S. Edwards to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 10 Aug. 1964, Byrd Papers; copy of the official statement of the campaign finances of Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 2 Dec. 1964, attached to M. J. Menefee to Levin Nock Davis, 2 Dec. 1964, *ibid.* Byrd marked the Shires letter requesting an interview "na" (no answer).

¹⁴ State Chairman Robert J. Corber had ruled initially that a nominee must receive the votes of two-thirds of the members of the committee, but he was overruled when I. R. Dovel's motion passed that only a majority vote was necessary.

¹⁵ Carl Shires, "May's Choice Hit By GOP's Broyhill," *Richmond News Leader*, 1 July 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, 28 July 1964, p. 9; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 31 Aug. 1964, p. 1; George M. Kelley, "The Lonesome End," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 20 Sept. 1964, p. B-5; George M. Kelley, "Republicans for Byrd Form Behind Strauss," *ibid.*, 8 Oct. 1964, p. 1.

*Virginia Historical Society*

Republican Richard A. May challenged incumbent Harry Byrd to discuss the issues facing Virginians in 1964. "The high office of United States Senator is one that should be continually earned—it is not a fief that 'belongs' to anyone by some sort of feudal-type right," May wrote. His campaign literature stressed his "Experience and Maturity" and touted his "WORLD-WIDE BACKGROUND." Borrowing a slogan from the Goldwater campaign, May declared that he was "A Voice—Not An Echo."

they failed to answer his letter, he said that he would withdraw. Receiving sufficient encouragement to go on, May pressed an attack on Organization rule and outlined how he would have voted differently from Byrd in the Senate. On 7 October he sent an open letter to Byrd challenging him to discuss the issues. "The high office of United States Senator is one that should be continually earned—it is not a fief that 'belongs' to anyone by some sort of feudal-type right," May wrote. Byrd, however, saw no need to change his strategy. On election day he received 63.8 percent of the vote to May's 19 percent.¹⁶ May's candidacy had at least indicated that some Republicans believed their party must assert its identity if Virginia were to have a true two-party system.

¹⁶ *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 27 Aug. 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, 1 Sept. 1964, p. 1; *Washington Evening Star*, 24 Sept. 1964, p. D-16; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 14 Oct. 1964, p. 6; Richard A. May to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 7 Oct. 1964, Byrd Papers; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 9 Oct. 1964, p. 2; Eisenberg, *Virginia Votes*, p. 244. The numerical totals were 592,260 votes for Byrd and 176,624 for May.

The Democratic state convention in July 1964 provided even stronger indications that major changes were taking place. Behind the scenes Byrd orchestrated the arrangements for the convention, which would be held in Richmond at the municipal auditorium, the Mosque. He suggested that Delegate Lewis A. McMurren, Jr., deliver the keynote address and serve as temporary chairman and that Speaker of the House of Delegates E. Blackburn Moore, his neighbor and hiking companion, be chosen permanent chairman. In spite of these arrangements, the 1964 convention was not a tightly controlled affair. Many Virginia Democrats were restless. Just before the convention, the Republican party nominated Goldwater for president. Virginia Republicans, who cast twenty-nine of their delegation's thirty votes for the Arizona senator, were jubilant. Philosophically, Goldwater and Byrd were very close. Like Byrd, Goldwater had voted against the Civil Rights Act. That vote increased the Arizonan's popularity in Virginia, especially in the Southside, where blacks were numerous, whites held economic and political power, and racial feelings were strong. Aware of Goldwater's appeal, many Virginia Democrats believed that the state party had to take a stand at the state convention in support of the national ticket. Liberals and party loyalists supported Johnson enthusiastically. Democratic moderates and even some conservatives were more concerned about Republican gains in recent elections. Democratic unity had suddenly become important to their political survival.¹⁷

The major issue at the Democratic state convention was whether to endorse Johnson's candidacy. As the convention approached, rumors circulated that leaders of the Organization would accept a mild resolution supporting Johnson. As chairman of the Resolutions Committee, Albertis Harrison was amenable to that course of action. When Byrd arrived at the Hotel John Marshall on the day before the convention, however, he emphatically rejected any endorsement. He conferred with Harrison and others but remained adamant. In the meantime, a motion to endorse Johnson was presented to the Resolutions Committee but was defeated by a vote of twenty-three to seven. As a result, the committee's report, issued the first day of the convention, contained no endorsement but was a strong states' rights document that called for strict interpretation

¹⁷ Watkins M. Abbitt to Charles R. Fenwick, 11 July 1964, Watkins M. Abbitt to James W. Fletcher, 2 July 1964, Abbitt Papers; Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, Suffolk-Franklin-Southside Edition, 17 July 1964, p. 27; *Richmond News Leader*, 18 July 1964, p. 1; James Latimer, "Virginia Delegates Fight Way Once Around Cow Palace," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 16 July 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, p. 1; *ibid.*, p. 5; Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd*, pp. 9-12; *Washington Post*, 22 July 1964, p. A22; William Chapman, "Organization Democrats Feel the Pinch As Republican Opposition Starts to Swell," *ibid.*, 23 July 1964, p. D3.

of the Constitution. It also commended Byrd and his Senate colleague, A. Willis Robertson, "for their valiant and unrelenting struggle" against the civil rights bill. The report conceded that it was "apparent that Lyndon B. Johnson will be nominated as the Democratic candidate for President" and appealed to him "to support and defend the Jeffersonian principles of states' rights, and the time-honored constitutional principle of separation of power among the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government."¹⁸ The resolution as submitted to the convention clearly bore the stamp of Senator Byrd.

The convention refused to accede to Byrd's wishes. When Harrison began reading the committee report, pro-Johnson delegates began yelling, booing, and waving Johnson-for-president signs. Such behavior was highly unusual at a Virginia Democratic convention. In the sweltering heat of a July afternoon in a building without air conditioning, the delegates initiated a rousing floor fight to endorse the president's election.¹⁹

The key delegate in leading the movement to endorse Johnson was Edgar Bacon, a forty-seven-year-old commonwealth's attorney from Lee County, in the southwestern tip of the state, and a member of the Resolutions Committee. After the committee's vote, Bacon had met with two other straight-ticket Democrats, George Rawlings of Fredericksburg and former state senator Armistead L. Boothe of Alexandria. Boothe suggested that offering a minority report would be complex. It would be better, he thought, to propose from the floor of the convention a short and simple amendment endorsing all Democratic nominees.²⁰

After the demonstration broke out, Bacon offered his amendment declaring that "[t]his convention endorses the election of Lyndon B. Johnson as President of the United States in the 1964 November election and further endorses the nominees of the Democratic party, and urges all members of the party to join hands to work and vote for a Democratic victory for the entire ticket." Pro-endorsement delegates from the Second, Ninth, and Tenth districts led the two-hour struggle to adopt the

¹⁸ George M. Kelley, "Signal-Switching," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 26 July 1964, p. B-5; interview with Mills E. Godwin, Jr., 6 July 1993, Suffolk, Va.; Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd*, pp. 251–52; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 19 July 1964, p. 1; resolution of the 1964 Virginia State Convention, Howard W. Smith Papers (#8731), ViU.

¹⁹ Ed Grimsley, "State Democrats Endorse Johnson," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 July 1964, p. 1; Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd*, p. 252; Frank L. Ball to Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., 20 July 1964, Harrison Executive Papers, 1963–64; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 19 July 1964, p. 1. Some of the protesters were from Arlington County, where a liberal faction had nominated its slate of delegates to the state convention in May (Washington *Evening Star*, 29 May 1964, p. B-1).

²⁰ James Latimer, "Political Fog Thickens With Pro-Johnson Vote," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 20 July 1964, p. 1.

amendment. William Chapman of the *Washington Post* wrote that “the overnight spontaneity of the move caught [the] Byrd forces off guard.” In addition, support of Johnson provided favorable ground on which to battle the Organization. Speaking for the Bacon amendment, Congressman W. Pat Jennings of the Ninth District recalled that in 1960 Johnson had received the endorsement of the state convention. Nothing had happened to “cause us to turn our backs on Lyndon B. Johnson.” Jennings urged his fellow delegates to be Democrats “from the courthouse to the White House.” Bacon could not understand how anyone “could oppose a resolution urging Democrats to support Democratic candidates.” Senator Charles T. Moses of Appomattox, an ally of Byrd, answered that the party loyalty pledge did not require Virginia Democrats to support candidates who espoused “foreign ideologies.” “Johnson broke the pledge when he took my rights,” Moses roared. “For God’s sake, vote it [the Bacon amendment] down.” John Wicker of Chesterfield, another Byrd ally, declared that Johnson was “not the same man” he was four years ago. Stuart B. Carter of Botetourt County, however, urged passage because the amendment would strengthen the Democratic congressional candidate opposing Richard Poff in the Sixth District.²¹

When the roll of congressional districts was called, the Bacon amendment passed, 633.5 to 596.5. It was the most serious rebuff to party leaders in decades. Surrounded by cheering delegates from the Ninth District, Jennings exulted, “We won, boys, we won! It’s been a long dry spell, but we won.” Operating under the unit rule, the Second, Ninth, and Tenth districts cast all their votes in favor of the amendment, while the Richmond-area Third District and the Southside Fourth District were unanimous in their opposition. Significantly, the Sixth District (the Lynchburg-Roanoke area), where Republicans had enjoyed recent success, supported the amendment, 113 to 19. As the *Washington Post* pointed out, “The most interesting aspect of this defeat for the Organization is the great degree to which it reflects the rising vigor and activity of the Republicans in Virginia.”²²

There are various interpretations of what political writer James Latimer called the second Bacon’s Rebellion. The *Times-Dispatch* reporter speculated at the time whether the upheaval signified “a historic

²¹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 July 1964, p. 1; amendment to resolution, Harrison Executive Papers, Political Papers; *Washington Post*, 23 July 1964, p. D3; Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd*, p. 253.

²² *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 July 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, 20 July 1964, p. 1; *Washington Post*, 23 July 1964, p. D3; *ibid.*, 22 July 1964, p. A22.

In the most serious rebuff to party leaders in decades, the Democratic state convention ignored Byrd's wishes and endorsed Lyndon Johnson's candidacy. Cartoonist Fred O. Seibel recorded the event in "Pinning A Tail On The Donkey."



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turning point in Virginia politics" or was simply a "momentary lapse" of Organization leaders. For many party loyalists the debate was a way to vent long-standing frustrations with the Byrd Organization. Nonetheless, the amendment could not have passed without the votes of some Organization members, including Democratic National Committeeman Sidney S. Kellam of Virginia Beach. Byrd himself had no public comment. Some supporters of the Organization who voted for the Bacon amendment assured the leaders that their action was in no way intended as an affront to Byrd. Liberal Frederick T. Stant, chairman of the Second District, remarked that many of those who voted for the amendment did not like the Civil Rights Act or Lyndon Johnson. "Goldwater sent us a lot of those votes," Stant said. Mills E. Godwin, Jr., has offered the most perceptive assessment. Many years later he declared that the adoption of the Bacon amendment was significant because "it was about the first time that the Democratic party leaders in Virginia had taken a strong stand in opposition to what Senator Byrd wanted the party to do." The incident was "the first public recognition of the reality" that the Organization's control was slipping. Subsequent developments, including the defeats of Senator A. Willis Robertson and Representative

Howard W. Smith in the 1966 primaries, validate Godwin's analysis. As J. Harvie Wilkinson III has written, the convention was also an indication that the Virginia Democratic party was "gradually but inevitably being nudged in the direction of its national counterpart."²³

The Democratic national convention at Atlantic City provided further evidence that Virginia's Democrats were moving closer to the national party. The Johnson administration was aware that it must make such movement easier. A report prepared for the Democratic National Committee and dated 1 August revealed that "[a]t this time Virginia is generally conceded to go for Goldwater." The report mentioned that in interviews Virginians on their own initiative brought up the civil rights issue. "In most districts of Virginia," the report noted, "this overshadows other legislative endeavors for which Johnson is praised."²⁴

Sensitive to the feelings of the white South, the Democrats adopted a moderate platform, especially on civil rights. Calling for "full observance . . . and fair, effective enforcement" of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the platform also condemned "lawless disregard for the rights of others . . . whether used to deny equal rights or obtain equal rights." Lewis McMurren, who represented Virginia on the Platform Committee, declared, "I don't see how we could possibly have done any better on civil rights." He was also interested in quashing a proposed plank dealing with *Reynolds v. Sims*, a Supreme Court decision handed down in June that ordered that seats in both houses of bicameral state legislatures be apportioned on the basis of population. He and other southerners succeeded in keeping the question of reapportionment out of the platform.²⁵

The Virginians also accepted grudgingly Johnson's choice of liberal senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota as his running mate. Before the convention Governor Harrison wrote, "I am sure I speak for many of our people in saying we would prefer a much more conservative minded individual as a candidate." After Humphrey's selection, however, Harrison said Virginians must accept political reality. On his return

²³ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 20 July 1964, p. 1; Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd*, p. 254; *Washington Post*, 20 July 1964, p. B1; Frank L. Ball to Albert S. Harrison, Jr., 20 July 1964, Harrison Executive Papers, 1963-64; C. Armonde Paxson to Mills E. Godwin, Jr., 23 July 1964, Byrd Papers; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 20 July 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, 21 July 1964, p. 4; interview with Mills E. Godwin, Jr., 6 July 1993.

²⁴ James Latimer, "McMurren Expects Moderate Platform," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 21 Aug. 1964, p. 1; "Virginia," 1 Aug. 1964, Files of the Democratic National Committee, TxU-J.

²⁵ "One Nation, One People: Democratic Platform, 1964," Office Files of George Busby, TxU-J; *Richmond News Leader*, 25 Aug. 1964, p. 8; George M. Kelley, "South Gains Favor, Says 3 Virginians," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 23 Aug. 1964, p. 1; Vincent Burke, "Demo, GOP Platforms Differ Sharply on U.S. Policy," *ibid.*, 25 Aug. 1964, p. 13.

to Richmond, the governor wrote industrialist Richard S. Reynolds, Jr., "I feel that we came out of the Convention very well. While Senator Humphrey would not have been the first choice of the people of Virginia for Vice-President, the fact remains that he is an able and personable man, and is unquestionably the man that a majority of the delegates at the convention would have chosen." Sidney Kellam predicted that Johnson would win in Virginia, although he conceded that another vice-presidential candidate "would have carried better."²⁶

The question of who would direct the Johnson campaign in the commonwealth was a major topic of discussion among party officials at Atlantic City. Frederick T. Stant has recalled that the leaders of the Byrd Organization did not want a campaign coordinator who was closely affiliated with the national party. Stant and other party loyalists wanted someone who would work for the ticket. Stant knew that the campaign coordinator must possess two qualifications. "You had to be someone who was a moderate . . . and the other thing that you have to remember in Virginia is you have to have a background," Stant has recalled.²⁷ On both counts the man best qualified was Sidney Kellam.

One of the most astute politicians of his time, Kellam was the logical choice to head the Johnson campaign in Virginia. Although a member in good standing of the Organization and with close ties to its leader, Kellam had consistently endorsed Democratic candidates for president, thereby maintaining his ties to the straight-ticket Democrats. Successful in the insurance business, the soft-spoken Kellam was elected five times as treasurer of Princess Anne County, where he dominated local politics. He proved his mettle as a political organizer when he managed the successful gubernatorial campaigns of John S. Battle in 1949 and Thomas B. Stanley in 1953.²⁸

On the eve of the Democratic national convention, H. W. Brawley, Johnson's southern regional campaign coordinator, declared that a

²⁶ Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., to Abraham Stavsky, 20 Aug. 1964, Harrison Executive Papers, 1963-64; George M. Kelley, "Virginians Support Nomination," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 27 Aug. 1964, p. 1; Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., to Richard S. Reynolds, Jr., 27 Aug. 1964, Harrison Executive Papers, Political Papers; Carl Shires, "Virginians' Reactions Are Mixed," *Richmond News Leader*, 27 Aug. 1964, p. 1.

²⁷ Interview with Frederick T. Stant, Jr., 14 July 1993, Norfolk, Va.

²⁸ George M. Kelley, "Old Hand May Lead Campaign," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 22 Aug. 1964, p. 1; Frank R. Blackford, "A Democrat's Democrat: Sidney Severn Kellam," *Virginia Record* 87 (1965): 9, 51; George M. Kelley, "Kellam to Head Va. Campaigns," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 3 Sept. 1964, p. 1. Kellam served as treasurer of Princess Anne County from 1932 to 1950, when he was appointed director of Virginia's Department of Conservation and Development, a position he held until 1953. Kellam's business interests included hotels in Virginia Beach.

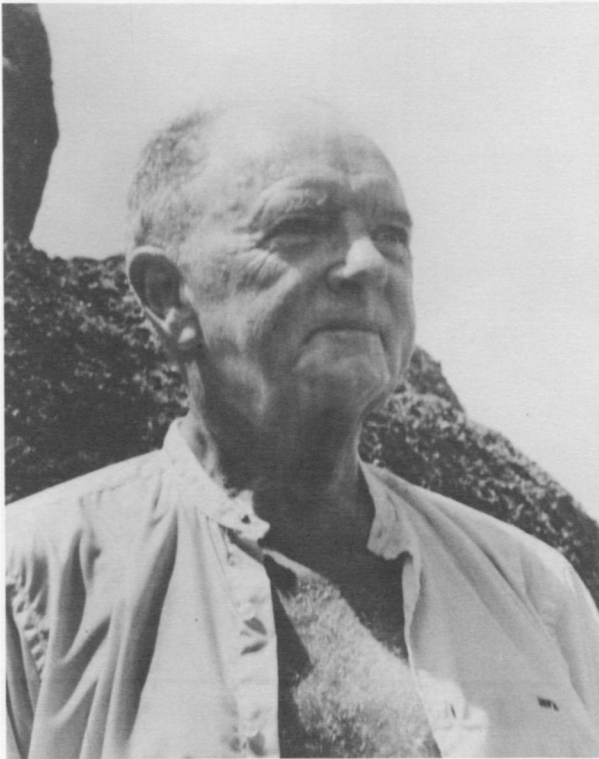
decision about the director of the campaign in Virginia would be reached during the convention. He made it clear that Kellam, who had favorably impressed national party officials during his four years as a national committeeman, was a prime candidate. Nonetheless, neither Kellam nor anyone else was appointed during the convention. Word filtered out that Organization leaders might prefer either Lewis McMurren or a committee to run the campaign. Richard S. Reynolds, Jr., chairman of the board of Reynolds Metals Company and a straight-ticket Democrat, remarked, "I don't think Johnson will carry Virginia unless Sidney Kellam is his campaign manager." Other delegates agreed that only Kellam could bridge the gap between Organization conservatives and supporters of President Johnson. Angered by the delay in naming a campaign manager, a group of Johnson backers nominally headed by Stant threatened to organize their own campaign for the national ticket.²⁹

On 2 September Congressman Watkins M. Abbitt, the Democratic state chairman, issued a cryptic announcement that he had appointed Kellam campaign manager for the Democratic presidential, senatorial, and congressional races in Virginia. Abbitt wrote that he was "confident" that Kellam would "conduct the campaign in a manner that will be pleasing and satisfactory to the Democrats of Virginia." Sensitive to the anti-Johnson feeling in his Southside congressional district, Abbitt himself never announced his preference in the presidential contest. Kellam stated that the direction of the campaign would be "a difficult assignment" but that Democratic unity was essential to prevent a Republican victory. The Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot* noted Kellam's reputation for winning campaigns but added that "[i]n none of those were the odds as great as in the coming battle."³⁰

Byrd's role in Kellam's appointment was the subject of much speculation. Murray Kempton wrote in the *New York World-Telegram* that the choice of Kellam, "a bondsman of the Senator's . . . rusted by his chains," seemed "a signal to Byrd loyalists all over the state." In the Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, George Kelley concluded that "[w]ith the nod finally going to Kellam . . . it is clear that Sen. Byrd will be tied to the ticket." Byrd was involved in the choice of Kellam, but his action did

²⁹ Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, 22 Aug. 1964, p. 1; George M. Kelley, "The Kellam Touch," *ibid.*, 6 Sept. 1964, p. B-5; *Richmond News Leader*, 26 Aug. 1964, p. 1; James Latimer, "New Ticket, But Old Problem For State Democratic Party," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 28 Aug. 1964, p. 1; *Richmond News Leader*, 27 Aug. 1964, p. 1; Carl Shires, "Dissident Virginians Plan LBJ Campaign," *ibid.*, 28 Aug. 1964, p. 1.

³⁰ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 3 Sept. 1964, p. 1; Watkins M. Abbitt, statement, "Primary and General Election 1964" folder, Abbitt Papers; Petersburg *Progress-Index*, 30 Oct. 1964, p. 9; Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, 4 Sept. 1964, p. 4.



Harry Byrd's role in the appointment of Sidney S. Kellam to direct Johnson's campaign in Virginia was the subject of much speculation. Byrd is shown here at Old Rag Mountain in Madison County about 1960.

James J. Kilpatrick Papers (#6626-c), Manuscripts Division, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library

not imply support of Johnson. Many years later Kellam revealed that Byrd had asked Abbitt to offer him the position. Why did Byrd want one of his most trusted lieutenants to manage the campaign of a candidate of whom he did not approve? Kellam believed that Byrd knew that some of his closest friends, personally and politically, could not support the nominee. Therefore, it was important that the campaign manager be someone who would not criticize them for not endorsing the ticket. Another explanation has been offered by Richard T. Short, a young conservative activist who was close to Byrd in 1964. Short has stated that the senator believed Kellam would be "able to bring people back together after the campaign was over," thereby uniting the party for the 1965 gubernatorial election. If Short's explanation is correct, Byrd was quite mistaken.³¹

³¹ Murray Kempton, "Johnson Adds Another Byrd To Aerie," *New York World-Telegram*, 9 Sept. 1964 (second edition), p. 33; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 6 Sept. 1964, p. B-5; interview with Sidney S. Kellam, 6 June 1983, Virginia Beach, Va.; interview with Richard T. Short, 19 July 1993, Virginia Beach, Va.

Kellam's skills as a campaign manager played a major part in the Democrats' success in Virginia in 1964. He moved quickly to heal factional wounds in Northern Virginia. Informed that the Third District Democratic Committee in the Richmond area would not support Johnson, Kellam organized a separate task force there. He also chose Richard S. Reynolds, Jr., as finance chairman of the statewide effort and E. A. Culverhouse, president of the Young Democratic Clubs of Virginia, as vice-chairman in charge of coordinating campaign activities of young voters. The Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot* commented that Kellam had made "knowledgeable moves, early and energetic, aimed at carrying the Old Dominion for Johnson."³²

Kellam was at his best in building coalitions. He knew that in 1960 the Democratic effort for Kennedy was divided between the regular Democratic headquarters under the state committee and the Straight Democratic Ticket Committee, an organization of liberal Democrats. Years later he recalled that he did not want "any offspring [of the SDTC] so the first thing I did was to get those people to work under one banner." Mills Godwin, a conservative, has described Kellam as "the best politician that I have known in Virginia." He assembled "a very formidable coalition for Johnson. It consisted of loyal Democrats and others who would support the ticket, the liberals . . . and labor and minority voters." Frederick Stant has declared that "Sidney was more than accommodating to me and as a result I could sell him to the liberals." Arthur Freeman, the leading black political organizer in Norfolk, found Kellam to be "a Virginia gentleman . . . a very astute politician. He knew how to get along with people, black and white."³³

Kellam was also successful in recruiting support for Johnson in the business community. When he approached leading corporate officers, the "usual response," Kellam recalled, was "I don't like Johnson, but I'm scared of Goldwater." Fear of Goldwater had been aroused by the candidate's statements about nuclear weapons, the so-called "trigger-happy" issue. Kellam's efforts were rewarded when an organization

³² George M. Kelley, "Va. Democrats Form 3rd Dist. Task Force," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 11 Sept. 1964, p. 1; Allan Jones, "Task Force for Johnson To Be Named in Third," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 10 Sept. 1964, p. 1; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 5 Sept. 1964, p. 1. In Northern Virginia's Tenth District, Kellam selected state Senator Charles R. Fenwick, a conservative, and Delegate Marian Galland, a liberal, as coordinators of the Democratic campaign. See William Chapman, "Fenwick, Mrs. Galland Appointed by Kellam," *Washington Post*, 10 Sept. 1964, p. E2.

³³ Interview with Sidney S. Kellam, 6 June 1983; interview with Mills E. Godwin, Jr., 6 July 1993; Mills E. Godwin, Jr., *Some Recollections* (Suffolk, Va., 1992), pp. 36-38; interview with Frederick T. Stant, Jr., 14 July 1993; interview with Arthur Freeman, 21 July 1993, Norfolk, Va.

known as Businessmen for Johnson in Virginia published the names of thirty-seven prominent Virginians in business, industry, banking, and the professions who endorsed the president.³⁴

Only one incident marred Kellam's otherwise flawless effort. In an attempt to win back defecting Democrats in Southside Virginia, he tried to use the race issue against Goldwater. The Republican party had prepared a pamphlet for use among black voters in the District of Columbia. The booklet—entitled “What About Civil Rights and Barry Goldwater?”—used quotations from the candidate and cited actions to prove his opposition to racial segregation. The Goldwater campaign ordered the pamphlet withdrawn after only a few had been distributed. When he received a copy with an unsigned note, Kellam decided to capitalize on the opportunity. He announced, “We are having thousands of copies printed, and we intend to get them into the hands of those who have been led to believe that Senator Goldwater is the enemy of civil rights.” The *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, a black weekly, deplored the action as “boldly and unashamedly injecting racism into the current presidential campaign.”³⁵ In a year of political change, Kellam's action was a reminder of past campaigns waged by the Organization.

The principal campaign for Goldwater in Virginia was waged by the Democrats for Goldwater and Byrd. Well-organized and well-financed groups of conservative Democrats supporting Republican presidential nominees in Virginia began with Democrats for Eisenhower in 1952. After the Republican convention in 1964, some Richmond conservatives who had been active in the previous efforts for Eisenhower and Nixon met to discuss their course of action. In mid-August Byrd suggested that two leaders of this group should meet with him after the Democratic national convention. The formation of Democrats for Goldwater and Byrd was announced on 1 September. The chairman, Clem D. Johnston of Roanoke, a former president of the United States Chamber of Commerce and the Virginia State Chamber, had served as chairman of Democrats for Nixon in the Sixth District in 1960. Stressing the close similarity of the voting records of Goldwater and Byrd, Johnston asked Virginians to put “principle over party” and vote for “these two national leaders who have the same ideas of sound government.”³⁶

³⁴ Interview with Sidney S. Kellam, 6 June 1983; Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1964* (New York, 1965), p. 296; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 4 Nov. 1964, p. 18; *ibid.*, 26 Oct. 1964, p. 2.

³⁵ George M. Kelley, “Barry's Tract to Get Big Play,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 4 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, Home Edition, 10 Oct. 1964, p. 14.

³⁶ Atkinson, *Dynamic Dominion*, p. 51; Samuel M. Bemiss to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 30 July 1964,

Byrd appreciated the efforts of the Goldwater-Byrd groups. Publicly he thanked both the Goldwater Democrats and the regular Democrats for their support. As the *Shenandoah Herald* put it, "By not actively supporting the presidential candidate—yet not publicly disavowing him—Senator Byrd is in the desirable position of picking fruit from both the Republican and Democratic orchards in addition to the independent vote." When Byrd received appeals for campaign materials from local Goldwater-Byrd groups, he sent them literature and photographs. In October, when Goldwater's appeal seemed to be slipping, however, Goldwater-Byrd officials, acting as individuals, pleaded with Byrd to break his silence and endorse the Republican nominee or at least state that the Democratic nominees were not worthy of his support, as he had done in 1952. Byrd declined. He was a candidate for reelection on the Democratic ticket, and, as he explained to Richard T. Short, chairman of the Fourth District chapter of Democrats for Goldwater-Byrd, he could not change parties because he would lose his positions as chairman of the Finance Committee and ranking member of the Armed Services Committee.³⁷

Byrd, however, was able to assist the Democrats for Goldwater at a crucial point in the contest. In September the Johnson campaign announced that in early October Lady Bird Johnson would make a whistle-stop tour through the South and schedule six stops in Virginia.³⁸ Richard Short called Byrd and told him the Democrats for Goldwater needed someone to counteract the effect of the Lady Bird Special. Byrd agreed and asked Short whom he wanted. Among the names Short mentioned was Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, who had recently renounced his Democratic party affiliation and endorsed Goldwater. Byrd suggested that Short see Thurmond about a possible campaign visit to Virginia. The South Carolinian was receptive to the idea but insisted that he could not go into Virginia and oppose Byrd. Thurmond said he would confer with the senator. About twenty-four hours later he called Short and said, "I will come to Virginia, but I want it to be under the auspices of Democrats for Goldwater-Byrd, and I will

Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to Samuel M. Bemiss, 11 Aug. 1964, Byrd Papers; Virginia Democrats for Goldwater and Byrd, news release, 2 Sept. 1964, Smith Papers.

³⁷ *Washington Post*, 4 Sept. 1964, p. B1; Woodstock, Va., *Shenandoah Herald*, 20 Aug. 1964, p. 2; Jack H. Spessard to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 9 Sept. 1964, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to Jack H. Spessard, 15 Sept. 1964, Rex Collier to Mrs. Robert M. Sime, 25 Sept. 1964, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to Rothwell H. Brown, 29 Sept. 1964, Landon Birkhead to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 28 Sept. 1964, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., to Landon Birkhead, 30 Sept. 1964, Henry L. Valentine II to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 23 Oct. 1964, H. Victor Millner, Jr., to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 24 Oct. 1964, Byrd Papers; interview with Richard T. Short, 19 July 1993.

³⁸ The president and first lady each called Byrd to ask that he ride on the Lady Bird Special, but he refused (interview with Richard T. Short, 19 July 1993).



*Harry F. Byrd, Sr., Papers (#9700), Manuscripts Division,
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Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, who had recently renounced his affiliation with the Democratic party and endorsed the candidacy of Barry Goldwater, made a 283-mile campaign swing through Southside Virginia in October 1964 under the auspices of Democrats for Goldwater-Byrd. Thurmond is shown here arriving at the *Reader's Digest* dinner in April 1963.

leave it to you to arrange my schedule.”³⁹ Thurmond wanted no one to have the impression that he supported Byrd’s opponent.

Thurmond’s visit to Southside Virginia in early October was the highlight of the campaign of Democrats for Goldwater-Byrd. Despite incessant rain and a throat ailment, Thurmond traveled 283 miles, spoke in ten communities, and drew enthusiastic crowds. Praising Byrd as well as Goldwater at every stop, Thurmond avoided racial appeals. Concluding his campaign swing before 1,400 cheering supporters at Norfolk’s Center Theater, he praised Goldwater as a man who will “preserve freedom in America from Communism.”⁴⁰

³⁹ George M. Kelley, “Va. Officials to Join Lady Bird on Tour,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 29 Sept. 1964, p. 1; interview with Richard T. Short, 19 July 1993.

⁴⁰ *Richmond News Leader*, 5 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 5 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, 6 Oct. 1964, p. 6; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 6 Oct. 1964, p. 1.



*Harry F. Byrd, Sr., Papers (#9700), Manuscripts Division,
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Although Strom Thurmond agreed to stump for Barry Goldwater in the Old Dominion, he made it clear that he did not support Richard May's candidacy against Harry Byrd. The South Carolinian's vigorous endorsement of Goldwater, in contrast to Byrd's famous "golden silences," was the subject of a Jim Berryman cartoon in the *Washington Star*.

Republican party leaders hoped Goldwater himself would visit Virginia. During the Republican national convention at San Francisco, Goldwater promised State Chairman Robert Corber that he would be

available to campaign in the state. In early September, when pro-Goldwater feelings appeared to be strong in Virginia, Goldwater's national headquarters announced a southern itinerary that omitted the Old Dominion. The problem was the senatorial candidacy of Richard May. Goldwater and Byrd had developed a warm personal relationship since Goldwater entered the Senate in 1953. If Goldwater came into Virginia, he would be placed in the embarrassing position of either endorsing May or ignoring the Republican senatorial candidate. When Johnson appeared to be gaining in Virginia during October, Goldwater's supporters hoped that he would visit the state, but he did not come.⁴¹

On 25 September Governor Harrison formally endorsed the Johnson-Humphrey ticket. He said that conservative Virginians should fight for their principles within the national Democratic party. After the governor's statement a reporter asked him, "Do you think Johnson will be best for the country?" Harrison responded, "If I did not think so, I would not vote for him."⁴² Three days later Democratic headquarters in Richmond announced that both Harrison and Godwin would board the Lady Bird Special.⁴³

At 6:50 A.M. on 5 October the brightly decorated Lady Bird Special carrying the president, the first lady, and their twenty-year-old daughter Lynda left Washington's Union Station on a four-day trip to eight southern states.⁴⁴ The president accompanied his wife only as far as Alexandria before returning to the White House. Mrs. Johnson spoke from the rear platform of the train in Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Ashland, Richmond, Petersburg, and Suffolk. She also addressed an outdoor rally at the new civic center in Norfolk. In Richmond the crowd was disappointing. In Suffolk at mid-day, however, about 8,000 people overflowed the station. The early afternoon rally in Norfolk attracted approximately 20,000 enthusiastic supporters, according to police estimates. The first lady's appearances undoubtedly aided her husband's

⁴¹ *Richmond News Leader*, 14 July 1964, p. 7; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 8 Sept. 1964, p. 2; Stephen Shadegg, *What Happened to Goldwater? The Inside Story of the 1964 Republican Campaign* (New York, 1965), p. 216; James Latimer, "Virginia Visits By Goldwater, Johnson Sought," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 11 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 28 Oct. 1964, p. 3.

⁴² *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 Sept. 1964, p. 1; transcript of Albertis S. Harrison, Jr.'s press conference, 25 Sept. 1964, Harrison Executive Papers, Political Papers. Harrison was harshly criticized by some conservatives for his stand. See letters in Box 2, Harrison Executive Papers, 1963-64. Some correspondents alleged that the governor was motivated by desire for a federal appointment, an allegation he has vigorously denied (Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., to the author, 15 July 1993).

⁴³ *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 29 Sept. 1964, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Lynda Bird Johnson was first lady of Virginia during the gubernatorial term of her husband, Charles S. Robb, 1982-86.



*Harry F. Byrd, Sr., Papers (#9700), Manuscripts Division,
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Harry Byrd refused invitations from the president and first lady to board the Lady Bird Special on its whistle-stop tour through the Old Dominion. Gib Crockett inscribed his cartoon "Lady Bird, Lynda Bird, Silent Byrd" from the *Washington Star*, "Dear Senator Harry, isn't it awful some of the things you have to listen to?"

campaign, but the Lady Bird Special also had a significant effect on Virginia politics beyond 1964.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ James Latimer, "35,000 Persons Greet First Lady in Virginia," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 7 Oct. 1964, p. 1; B. W. Mader, "Haddock Says City Slighted First Lady," *ibid.*, 8 Oct. 1964, p. 2; George M. Kelley, "Va., N.C. Greet 1st Lady," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 7 Oct. 1964, p. 1.

Democrats loyal to the national ticket were elated that Virginia's governor and lieutenant governor boarded the Lady Bird Special. Sidney Kellam was instrumental in getting Harrison and Godwin to make appropriate remarks. Two days before the trip Kellam called Godwin and suggested that he and his wife board the train in Washington. "It would be a good move for you," Kellam explained. Because Godwin intended to run in the 1965 gubernatorial election, it was vital that he overcome his reputation as a supporter of massive resistance to school desegregation and broaden his appeal within the party. Visible support of the national Democratic nominees would help. Kellam asked Godwin in his capacity as lieutenant governor to introduce the president at Alexandria.⁴⁶ Knowing that some of his conservative friends would be displeased, Godwin reluctantly agreed to Kellam's request. He has since recalled how pleased the legislators from Northern Virginia were with his introduction of the president: "I had made a very good move as a conservative candidate for Governor, and, being somewhat clothed with the Byrd atmosphere, it was an excellent strategic move." It was not long before those state legislators pledged their support to his unannounced candidacy for governor.⁴⁷

Harrison joined the Lady Bird Special in Richmond and rode the train to Norfolk. Offering warm words of welcome to the first lady, he also commended the president for the manner in which he handled the transition of power after Kennedy's death and described him as "one whom we have known and with whom we have worked for years in an atmosphere of friendliness and understanding. His re-election will be our best assurance of continued open lines of communication on problems of mutual concern and matters of national import." The governor made no mention of any of the president's programs. Nonetheless, Johnson's southern regional campaign director described Harrison's speech as "outstanding." In fact, it had made it easier for some Organization members to support the national ticket.⁴⁸

The appearance of Harrison and Godwin on the Lady Bird Special enraged many conservatives and irreparably divided the Byrd Organiza-

⁴⁶ The usual procedure would have been for the governor to introduce the president. Godwin asked Harrison why he would not go to Washington, but the governor, laughing, declared that he was too busy and could not possibly do it (see Godwin, *Some Recollections*, p. 39). Harrison was from Southside Virginia, and he did not want to expose himself to any more wrath from the white residents of his home region than necessary.

⁴⁷ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 7 Oct. 1964, p. 1; interview with Mills E. Godwin, Jr., 6 July 1993; Godwin, *Some Recollections*, pp. 38–40.

⁴⁸ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 7 Oct. 1964, p. 1; Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., text of remarks introducing Lady Bird Johnson, 6 Oct. 1964, Harrison Executive Papers, 1963–64; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 7 Oct. 1964, p. 1; Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., to the author, 15 July 1993.



Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Collection

Lady Bird Johnson spoke from the rear platform of the Lady Bird Special in Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Ashland, Richmond, Petersburg, and Suffolk. In addition, she addressed an outdoor rally in Norfolk that attracted 20,000 enthusiastic supporters. Virginia's future first lady, Lynda Johnson Robb, accompanied her mother on the whistle-stop tour.

tion. In addition to Byrd, other high-ranking Democrats refused to ride the train. Most conspicuous by his absence was Watkins Abbitt, the Democratic state chairman, who represented Petersburg and Suffolk in Congress. Henry L. Valentine II, a Richmond broker, summed up the reaction of many conservatives when he wrote that "[t]he statements supporting Johnson and Humphrey made by some of our elected state people who ran as conservative candidates . . . have knocked the wind out of me and thousands like me." The *Lynchburg News* believed that the increasing political power of urban areas and black Virginians had compelled Organization leaders to "modify their conservatism for political expediency's sake, in order to maintain their positions of power and influence in the State Democratic Party and, through the Party, in the state government it controls." Richard Short has remarked that the Lady Bird Special "worked 100 percent in Sidney Kellam's

strategy for Mills Godwin. It did not work in bringing the Byrd Democrats back together. They were able to bring some back together, but there was a split, and it never healed.”⁴⁹ The consequences of that split would become obvious in the 1965 gubernatorial and the 1966 congressional elections.

The Virginia Conservative party was founded in July 1965 in reaction to Godwin’s support of Johnson. As Frank B. Atkinson, historian of the modern Virginia Republican party, has written, the Conservative party was chiefly “a reaction to Godwin and his embrace of President Johnson, whose civil rights policies were anathema to Southside conservatives.” Richard Short, the party’s finance chairman, has confirmed that without the lieutenant governor’s endorsement of LBJ, the Conservative party “would have never been formed. They would have all supported Mills Godwin if it hadn’t been for that train.” The Conservative party’s candidate for governor, William J. Story, Jr., denounced Godwin for thinking he could “ride the Lady Bird Special into the Governor’s Mansion.” As Godwin formed a broad-based coalition that included blacks and organized labor, Virginia’s Conservative party provided an outlet for the frustrations of Southside whites. Although Godwin was elected, he failed to receive a majority because Story received 13.4 percent, 75,307 votes, principally from the traditional Democratic stronghold of Southside Virginia.⁵⁰

In 1966 the Conservative party inflicted more serious injury on the Organization. Because Harry Byrd, Sr., had retired in November 1965, both United States Senate seats were up for election. Senator Harry F. Byrd, Jr., who had been appointed to his father’s seat, and Senator A. Willis Robertson were challenged in the Democratic primary by two former members of the Organization, former state senator Armistead Boothe and state Senator William B. Spong. The Virginia Conservative party asked its supporters to abstain from voting in the Democratic primary. An estimated 15,000 to 20,000 voters, principally in the Southside, heeded the request. This abstention undoubtedly caused the defeat of Robertson by 611 votes and Byrd’s narrow margin of victory by 8,225 votes. The Conservatives’ refusal to participate also probably caused the defeat by 645 votes of Congressman Howard Smith of the Eighth

⁴⁹ *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 7 Oct. 1964, p. 4; *Richmond News Leader*, 6 Oct. 1964, p. 1; Henry L. Valentine II to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 23 Oct. 1964, Byrd Papers; *Lynchburg News*, 18 Oct. 1964, p. D-2; interview with Richard T. Short, 19 July 1993.

⁵⁰ Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd*, pp. 270, 272–76, 279–82; Atkinson, *Dynamic Dominion*, p. 155; interview with Richard T. Short, 19 July 1993.

District.⁵¹ It was indeed ironic that their anger at the Democratic party deprived Virginia of two of its most conservative leaders.

By late September in 1964, it was obvious to many politicians and political writers that Johnson was “narrowing the gap” in Virginia. After the appointment of Sidney Kellam as campaign manager, no prominent Democrats had joined Democrats for Goldwater-Byrd. Democratic campaigners had also been raising farmers’ concerns about Goldwater’s agricultural program.⁵² The most interesting development, however, was the extraordinary increase in voter registration, especially among black Virginians, who were not likely to support Barry Goldwater. His votes against the civil rights bill and antipoverty legislation, as well as his criticism of Social Security and the Tennessee Valley Authority, made his candidacy anathema to most African Americans.⁵³

Perhaps the most important long-term result of the 1964 presidential election in Virginia was the surge in political activity among the state’s African-American population. Knowing that the poll tax would no longer be an obstacle to registration, black political organizations such as Richmond’s Crusade for Voters and the Tidewater Voter Registration Project (TVRP) launched registration drives. The Southern Regional Council’s Voter Education Project (VEP), based in Atlanta, provided financial assistance to these groups, as well as to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Matt Reese of the Democratic National Committee wrote Chairman John Bailey that the VEP had done “a remarkable job in Negro registration in the South.” Estimates of the total number of blacks registered to vote in Virginia ranged as high as 200,000, an increase of about 80,000 since April 1964.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd*, pp. 326–33, 339; Bruce J. Dierenfield, *Keeper of the Rules: Congressman Howard W. Smith of Virginia* (Charlottesville, 1987), p. 217. The Conservative party nominated candidates for both Senate seats in the general election. Each received 7.9 percent of the vote (Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd*, p. 341).

⁵² George M. Kelley, “Narrowing the Gap,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 27 Sept. 1964, p. B-5. Although Goldwater denied that, if elected, he would abolish agricultural price supports immediately, Democrats quoted the Republican candidate as having written that he favored “prompt and final termination of the farm subsidy program.” See Barry M. Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (New York, 1960), p. 43; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 9 Oct. 1964, p. 4.

⁵³ *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 9 Oct. 1964, p. 4; Andrew Buni, *The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1902–1965* (Charlottesville, 1967), pp. 219–20.

⁵⁴ Buni, *Negro in Virginia Politics*, pp. 221, 223; Susanna McBee, “2 Million Negroes Registered in South,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 3 Aug. 1964, p. 8; interview with Arthur Freeman, 21 July 1993; Francis Pickens Miller to Dr. Edward E. Haddock, 2 Sept. 1964, Francis Pickens Miller Papers (#9760), ViU; Matt Reese to [John M. Bailey], 28 Sept. 1964, White House Central Files, TxU-J; James Latimer, “Virginia Vote May Run As High As One Million,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 Oct. 1964, p. 1. Virginia’s two black weekly newspapers, the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* and the *Richmond Afro-American*, were unsparing in their criticism of Goldwater and

On 25 September, Governor Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., formally endorsed the Johnson-Humphrey ticket. He boarded the Lady Bird Special in Richmond and rode the train to Norfolk.



*Harry F. Byrd, Sr., Papers (#9700), Manuscripts Division,
Special Collections Department,
University of Virginia Library*

The most important voter registration drives were in Norfolk, Richmond, and the Southside. In July the Junior Chamber of Commerce of Norfolk sponsored one that enrolled 5,325 new voters, of whom approximately 2,900 were black.⁵⁵ The electoral board had agreed to extend hours to 9 P.M. each working day over a two-week period. In the black community eleven college students sponsored by the YWCA canvassed in the housing projects. Arthur Freeman, executive director of the

associated him with white supremacists. The State Board of Elections estimated that the number of black registrants increased from 117,031 in April to 173,832 in October. Those figures, however, were incomplete; several localities submitted the same numbers for both dates (telephone interview with Lorraine Thompson, Virginia State Board of Elections, 7 Sept. 1993, Richmond, Va.).

⁵⁵ The *Norfolk Journal and Guide* used the figure 2,935, but that number included two additional days beyond the two weeks of the drive. See *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, Home Edition, 8 Aug. 1964, p. 1. The total number of new registrants in the period 1961–63 had been 4,805.

TVRP, arranged for free bus transportation from those areas to city hall. TVRP teams also visited local churches to sign up prospective voters.⁵⁶

Despite lack of cooperation by the Norfolk electoral board, the TVRP launched a highly successful "last chance to register" drive in late September. The registration deadline for voting in the November election was 3 October. The electoral board refused to offer evening hours or to open five satellite offices in the precincts despite repeated pleas from the board's secretary, Joseph T. Fitzpatrick, who also served as Democratic city chairman. The TVRP's Teen Corps went door-to-door in neighborhoods such as Chesterfield Heights. Freeman has recalled that the Teen Corps members, mostly twelve to fourteen years old, were well organized and closely supervised.⁵⁷

Despite the successes in such neighborhoods, the largest number of new voters continued to come from public housing. The NAACP Youth Council, assisted by the Teen Corps, worked in the projects. Freeman has observed that "[t]he people in the projects enjoyed that somebody cared enough to come to the door and say, 'We'll give you a ride downtown. You need to become a registered voter. You're doing this for your grandchildren. . . . We'll go with you and we'll see that it gets done.'" On 28 September the TVRP set up a voter registration information booth in the Downtown Plaza Shopping Center.⁵⁸

On the final day of registration, the long lines at city hall presented a special problem as the 4 P.M. closing time approached.⁵⁹ Delegate Henry E. Howell, Jr., of Norfolk, representing George Taylor, Jr., research director for the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, obtained a court order requiring that those waiting in line at 4 P.M. be registered.⁶⁰

Arthur Freeman reported that 4,511 blacks had registered under the sponsorship of the TVRP from mid-July through 3 October. He estimated that an additional 1,500 had been registered as a result of drives sponsored by other civic organizations. State records indicate that

⁵⁶ *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 1 Aug. 1964, p. 17; *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, Home Edition, 8 Aug. 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, Home Edition, 25 July 1964, p. 1. The buses were paid for by the AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education.

⁵⁷ *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, Home Edition, 19 Sept. 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, Home Edition, 26 Sept. 1964, p. 2; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 5 Aug. 1964, p. 13; *ibid.*, 29 Sept. 1964, p. 17; interview with Arthur Freeman, 21 July 1993.

⁵⁸ Interview with Arthur Freeman, 21 July 1993; *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, Home Edition, 3 Oct. 1964, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Levin Nock Davis, secretary of the State Board of Elections, had informed registrars that legally they were not required to register those still in line when the offices closed. See *Richmond News Leader*, 3 Oct. 1964, p. 1.

⁶⁰ *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 6 Oct. 1964, p. 13. Even after the order was served on the registrar, police allowed only those inside the building to stay and be registered. Those outside were turned away. See *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 4 Oct. 1964, p. 1.

African-American registration in Norfolk grew from 10,071 in April to 15,801 in October. The increase was reflected on 3 November, when 12,073 more voters went to the polls than in 1960.⁶¹

In Richmond black registrations also rose dramatically. During the summer the NAACP Youth Council led a citywide effort. In September the Junior Chamber of Commerce persuaded City Registrar Vernon Davis to extend hours at his office in the Mosque to 8:30 P.M. The Richmond branch of the NAACP and the Crusade for Voters arranged for transportation in private and rented cars and chartered buses.⁶² The NAACP declared that on the first day of the drive, 8 September, about 400 blacks were registered. The process took so long, however, that some officials of the Chamber of Commerce and Dr. William Thornton, chairman of the Crusade for Voters, complained. On 16 September the registrar announced that temporary offices would be opened in five post offices. They would be open only until 5:45 P.M., however, and the office at the Mosque would discontinue evening hours on 21 September. Thornton called in vain for the continuation of night hours. NAACP leaders sent a letter to Davis protesting that no post office convenient to North Side blacks had been chosen as a registration site. Davis denied any attempt to inconvenience blacks. "We have been very courteous to these people," he stated. He justified termination of night hours by saying his assistants were overworked. At the same time, however, he rejected the offer of volunteer assistance from representatives of postal organizations.⁶³

On 3 October, the registration deadline, many blacks in Richmond experienced frustration and disappointment. Approximately 600 who were standing in line at the various sites at closing time were denied the opportunity to register.⁶⁴ Most of those turned away were black. The NAACP took the names and addresses and times of arrival of those

⁶¹ Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, 6 Oct. 1964, p. 13; Norfolk *Journal and Guide*, Home Edition, 10 Oct. 1964, p. 1; Buni, *Negro in Virginia Politics*, p. 269; Eisenberg, *Virginia Votes*, pp. 223, 240. Also assisting the TVRP in the registration drive was the Women's Division of Democrats for Election of the Johnson-Humphrey Ticket.

⁶² The Crusade for Voters, a black organization, was founded during the massive resistance crisis of 1958 to increase African Americans' participation in Richmond politics at all levels.

⁶³ Richmond *Afro-American*, 5 Sept. 1964, p. 3; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 9 Sept. 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, 10 Sept. 1964, p. 2; *ibid.*, 17 Sept. 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, 20 Sept. 1964, p. B-1; *ibid.*, 23 Sept. 1964, p. 2; *Richmond News Leader*, 23 Sept. 1964, p. 29.

⁶⁴ There was a dispute about exactly how many registrants were turned away. Davis said the number was 571, while W. Lester Banks, executive secretary of the state NAACP, declared that 616 prospective voters had been excluded (*Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 6 Oct. 1964, p. 1). The third of October was a Saturday, but the registrars' offices were required to be open because it was the deadline. Many working people who had missed the evening hours in September came to register on that day. See *Richmond News Leader*, 3 Oct. 1964, p. 1.

waiting in line and mailed them appeal petitions, which they were to file with the clerk of the court. On behalf of the 280 prospective voters who appealed, Attorney Roland D. Ealey asked the court to order Davis to open the books and register them. Judge W. Moscoe Huntley denied the petition. He agreed with the commonwealth's contention that state law required the books to be closed thirty days before an election and that reopening them would violate the law. Huntley also noted the fact that the registrar had provided night hours and branch offices.⁶⁵

Despite the slow pace, blacks in Richmond had been given more liberal opportunities to register than blacks in Norfolk, where neither extended hours nor branch offices were authorized during the peak registration period.⁶⁶ Many took advantage of the opportunity; of the 17,380 persons registered in Richmond between July and 3 October, more than 63 percent were black. The Crusade for Voters followed up the drive with voter education clinics and joined with the NAACP in an extensive get-out-the-vote effort on election day. Black participation played a major part in increasing turnout in Richmond by 17,685 over the 1960 election.⁶⁷

Black voter registration drives in the Southside Fourth Congressional District alarmed Representative Watkins Abbitt. Samuel W. Tucker, a black attorney who had gained prominence in school desegregation cases as counsel for the NAACP, had filed as an independent candidate for Congress opposing Abbitt. After registration closed, Abbitt wrote to the registrars in his district asking for a racial breakdown of newly registered voters. Katherine T. Clements of Southampton County was one of many registrars whose response could not have pleased Abbitt. "We registered about 1140 after the opening of the books in July," she wrote. "Of these, there were 204 whites and 936 colored." Abbitt agreed with a supporter that it would be "most helpful" if someone would check to see if any of the new registrants had been convicted of a crime, which would deprive them of their voting rights.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 4 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, 6 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *Richmond Afro-American*, 10 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, 31 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *Richmond News Leader*, 26 Oct. 1964, p. 1.

⁶⁶ An investigation of registration practices in Richmond by the Federal Bureau of Investigation found no evidence that federal civil rights laws had been violated. See *Richmond Afro-American*, 24 Oct. 1964, p. 1.

⁶⁷ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 11 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *Richmond Afro-American*, 17 Oct. 1964, p. 1; Eisenberg, *Virginia Votes*, pp. 224, 240.

⁶⁸ Watkins M. Abbitt to John E. Nemetz, 25 Sept. 1964, Abbitt Papers; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 Jan. 1964, p. B-1; *Richmond Afro-American*, 22 Aug. 1964, p. 16; Katherine T. Clements to Watkins M. Abbitt, 23 Oct. 1964, Watkins M. Abbitt to C. D. Hendrick, 19 Oct. 1964, Abbitt Papers.

Like Byrd, Goldwater had voted against the Civil Rights Act. That position increased the Arizonan's popularity in Virginia, especially in the Southside. Fred O. Seibel captioned his cartoon on Goldwater's stance "Over the Top in a Courageous Leap."



*Fred O. Seibel Papers (#2531), Manuscripts Division,
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The incumbent congressman was "very much concerned about the apathy of the white voters." He decided that the best way to dispel indifference among his white constituents was to have newspapers in the district "run a picture of the two candidates for the House . . . several days before the election as a news item." He was successful in getting every newspaper except the Greensville County weekly to publish the desired photographs. Actually Abbitt had little to worry about, because whites outnumbered blacks as registered voters by two and one-half to one. Abbitt received 53,857 votes to Tucker's 23,682. Nevertheless, Tucker received more than 1,000 votes in seven counties and trailed Abbitt by only 1,100 votes in the city of Petersburg. What was important was not that Tucker lost, but that he demonstrated the potential electoral power of Southside blacks.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Watkins M. Abbitt to Frank R. Watkins, 16 Oct. 1964, Watkins M. Abbitt to W. P. Griffin, 16 Oct. 1964, Watkins M. Abbitt to Harry F. Byrd, Sr., 2 Nov. 1964, Abbitt Paper; Carl Shires, "Johnson Called Sure Winner in 4th," *Richmond News Leader*, 26 Oct. 1964, p. 6; Buni, *Negro in Virginia Politics*, p. 227; Commonwealth of Virginia, *Statement of the Vote, 1964* (Richmond, 1964), p. 9.

The surge in black registration was a favorable omen for Johnson in Virginia. Another positive sign was Kellam's announcement that sixty-nine Democratic legislators had responded affirmatively to a letter inquiring whether they were supporting the Democratic ticket.⁷⁰ Some leaders of the Byrd Organization as well as some Southside legislators who were usually party loyalists were conspicuous by their absence. Richard Short of the Democrats for Goldwater-Byrd arranged for fifteen conservative Democratic legislators to issue a statement that they could not "recommend or endorse the Johnson-Humphrey candidacy, based as it is on the extreme political philosophy typified by the A.D.A. [Americans for Democratic Action], and other left-wing, socialistic, and collectivist groups." Many legislators with close ties to Byrd, including state Senator Garland Gray of Waverly, signed the statement.⁷¹ According to Short, Delegate W. Roy Smith of Petersburg was "the major coordinator of getting them all together." Short handled the implementation of the plan. The statement was quite similar to Byrd's repudiation of the Stevenson-Sparkman ticket in 1952.⁷² What was more significant, however, was the number of state legislators who had pledged their support to a Democratic president whose civil rights and social welfare policies were so much at variance with the philosophy of the dominant faction of the Virginia Democratic party.

Surprisingly little public opinion polling was done in Virginia. President Johnson informed Mills Godwin on the Lady Bird Special that a poll he had commissioned indicated that he led Goldwater, 57 percent to 43 percent, with a 4 percent margin of error. He gave no details about who conducted the poll or how it was done. A thorough search of the records at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library relating to the 1964 campaign has

⁷⁰ The letter writer was John Warren Cooke, Democratic majority leader in the House of Delegates. On 29 September he was the first Organization leader in the General Assembly (except Lieutenant Governor Mills Godwin) to endorse the Johnson-Humphrey ticket (see William Chapman, "Byrd Machine Leader Backs Johnson," *Washington Post*, 30 Sept. 1964, p. E9). There were 126 Democrats in the 1964 General Assembly. Two other Democratic legislators who were known to support the ticket had not responded to the letter. A similar statement endorsing the Kennedy-Johnson ticket had gained fifty-two signatures in 1960. See James Latimer, "71 Democrats in Assembly Held Committed to Johnson," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 Oct. 1964, p. 1.

⁷¹ *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 18 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, 21 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 Oct. 1964, p. 1; interview with Richard T. Short, 19 July 1993; Louisa *Central Virginian*, 22 Oct. 1964, p. 2. State Senator FitzGerald Bemiss, a Democrat from Richmond, also repudiated Johnson's candidacy in a separate statement issued on 25 October. Like his colleagues, he did not endorse Goldwater's candidacy. See *Richmond News Leader*, 26 Oct. 1964, p. 12.

⁷² Interview with Richard T. Short, 19 July 1993; James Latimer, "15 Democrats In Legislature Rap Johnson," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 21 Oct. 1964, p. 1.

revealed no evidence of a statewide poll in Virginia. It is possible that such a poll was conducted and the results not retained. Perhaps, too, Johnson invented the poll as a morale booster for his Virginia supporters.⁷³ One unscientific sampling of moviegoers conducted during four weeks beginning 28 September in twenty-five theaters across the state gave Johnson 55.45 percent to 44.55 percent for Goldwater. In its report on the southern states released about 10 October, the *Congressional Quarterly* rated Goldwater the favorite in Virginia. Public opinion analyst Samuel Lubell, however, found changing attitudes during the second week of October while interviewing in Florida and Virginia. He concluded that Goldwater's strength had definitely slipped but that enough disillusioned Democrats still supported the Arizona senator to give him "a small edge" in both states.⁷⁴

Unrest overseas, which usually enhances the incumbent's chances in an election, undoubtedly contributed to Goldwater's continuing decline in popularity in Virginia in late October. Within forty-eight hours Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev was deposed, the People's Republic of China detonated its first nuclear bomb, and Britain voted out the Conservative party, which had held power for thirteen years. On 18 October the president spoke on television about these matters. In contrast to Johnson's calm and reasonable presentation, Goldwater seemed strident in his televised speech on the same topics. The difference was not lost on the Norfolk *Ledger-Star*, which commented, "The President's address was an excellent summation of facts, a statesmanlike exposition of United States intentions and all in all unquestionably a top performance." On the other hand, "Senator Goldwater, we very much fear, is too uncomplicated a man to deal with these affairs with the intellectual broadness they seem to us to require."⁷⁵

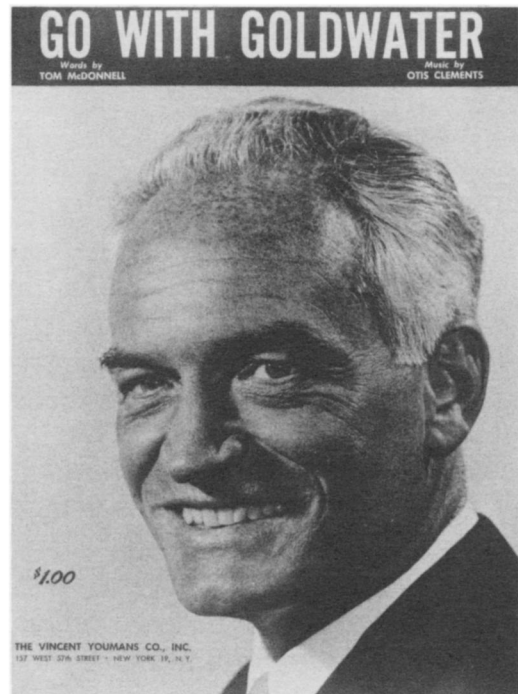
Both candidates won significant editorial support from Virginia newspapers. Thirteen favored Goldwater, while eight supported Johnson. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* described the Arizona senator as "a man of character . . . ability, patriotism and dedication . . . who has

⁷³ Documents in the White House Central Files at the Johnson Library mention ten statewide polls. Virginia is not one of those states. A report of a poll of Virginia voters on 27 May 1966 in the office files of presidential assistant Fred Panzer makes no mention of any polling done in 1964 in Virginia. For purposes of comparison, this report used the 1964 election percentages. See Hayes Redmon to Bill Moyers, 27 May 1966, Office Files of Fred Panzer, TxU-J.

⁷⁴ George M. Kelley, "A Rash of Polls," Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, 11 Oct. 1964, p. B-5; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 11 Oct. 1964, p. 1; *ibid.*, 8 Oct. 1964, p. 2; *ibid.*, 11 Oct. 1964, p. 22-A; *ibid.*, 28 Oct. 1964, p. 2; Samuel Lubell, "President Is Gaining Strength in the South," *ibid.*, 15 Oct. 1964, p. 21.

⁷⁵ White, *The Making of the President*, pp. 371-72; Norfolk *Ledger-Star*, 19 Oct. 1964, p. 6; *ibid.*, 27 Oct. 1964, p. 6.

The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* endorsed Goldwater as “a man of character . . . ability, patriotism and dedication . . . who has been pictured as a wild man who would blow up the world, if given half a chance. He is probably the most vilified and misrepresented statesman of his generation.”



Smithsonian Institution

been pictured as a wild man who would blow up the world, if given half a chance. He is probably the most vilified and misrepresented statesman of his generation.” The *Richmond News Leader* cited “four major themes” developed by Goldwater: his belief in limited government, his belief in a strict construction of the Constitution, his belief in freedom, and his assessment of the threat of communism. To the *Roanoke Times*, Goldwater also appeared to be “an honest, deeply patriotic, and earnest man” who believed “in the integrity and freedom of the individual, with the least possible molestation and dictation from his government.”⁷⁶

The most significant endorsements of Johnson appeared in the Norfolk newspapers. The morning *Virginian-Pilot* based its support on the president’s “[p]recise, carefully wrought decisions . . . on major issues during the past 11 months.” He had demonstrated that he was “better fitted for leadership in the nuclear era.” Characterizing Johnson as the “realistic choice,” the evening *Ledger-Star* also praised the president’s performance in taking office during difficult times and subsequently managing “foreign issues, with a sure and careful hand.”

⁷⁶ *Editor and Publisher*, 31 Oct. 1964, pp. 11–12; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 Oct. 1964, p. 14-B; *Richmond News Leader*, 16 Oct. 1964, p. 14; *Roanoke Times*, 25 Oct. 1964, p. A-6.

Because “[t]he real issue” was the handling of foreign affairs, the *Ledger-Star* was troubled by Goldwater’s tendency to see “most things in terms of blacks and whites.” The Fredericksburg *Free Lance-Star* stated that “[t]he combination of his [Johnson’s] Southern background and broad national experience gives him a perspective sorely needed in handling so sensitive a problem” as civil rights.⁷⁷

By mid-October, Democratic leaders were aware that the tide in Virginia had turned in favor of Johnson. Even the cautious Governor Harrison conceded that the Goldwater candidacy had not “caught on.” On 21 October Larry O’Brien, co-director of the Johnson-Humphrey campaign, met with the leaders of the Virginia campaign at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington.⁷⁸ Among those attending were campaign officials Sidney Kellam and Frederick Stant and Congressman Porter Hardy of the Second District. After the meeting O’Brien wrote Johnson a five-page memorandum. “You are making gains in Virginia, and at this point I would rate the race as leaning to you,” O’Brien declared. At the beginning of the campaign the president had been “a 3-to-1 underdog in Virginia.” O’Brien believed that Kellam was “apparently doing an excellent job,” and the result was “an organizational situation far superior to our 1960 effort.” O’Brien wrote that the Goldwaterites in Virginia were attacking Humphrey “hard.” This was, he noted, “the first sign of organized anti-Humphrey activity on a broad statewide scale we have found.” Because the election was so close in Virginia, O’Brien recommended that Johnson “consider a quick foray there.” Although Kellam had suggested a one-stop visit to either Roanoke or Richmond, Stant has recalled that Kellam did not want the president to come into Virginia. Kellam believed the election would be close and, if anything went wrong on a Johnson visit, “it could swing a delicate balance.” Johnson made a late October campaign trip from Maryland to Florida but did not stop in the Old Dominion.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, 23 Oct. 1964, p. 4; Norfolk *Ledger-Star*, 27 Oct. 1964, p. 6; Fredericksburg *Free Lance-Star*, 14 Oct. 1964, p. 4. Both of the black weeklies gave ringing endorsements to the Democratic ticket. See Richmond *Afro-American*, 17 Oct. 1964, p. 4; Norfolk *Journal and Guide*, National Edition, 17 Oct. 1964, p. 14.

⁷⁸ Larry O’Brien had played a key role in organizing John F. Kennedy’s successful campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination and for the presidency itself in 1960. Johnson appointed him postmaster general in 1965.

⁷⁹ Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., to John M. Bailey, 15 Oct. 1964, Harrison Executive Papers, Political Papers; Larry O’Brien to Lyndon B. Johnson, 21 Oct. 1964, Office Files of Mike Manatos, TxU-J; interview with Frederick T. Stant, Jr., 14 July 1993; material on Lyndon B. Johnson’s campaign trip to the South, 24–26 Oct. 1964, Files of the Democratic National Committee, TxU-J.

In the final days of the campaign Kellam employed effective advertising. The Democrats used Goldwater's own words to communicate his inconsistent statements on Social Security, fiscal policy, and national security as well as his voting record on education issues. Another advertisement summed up the achievements of the Kennedy-Johnson administration by comparing its accomplishments with the promises made in the 1960 platform. In the Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, George Kelley contrasted the Democrats' advertising with that used by the Democrats for Goldwater, which sought "to imply things rather than to campaign on the basis of facts." One of their advertisements featured dark clouds marked as scandals emanating from the White House, while another featured a group picture of Johnson and civil rights leaders with a large caption, "HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE RECENT RACE DISORDERS?"—a reference to the racial violence in northern cities during the summer.⁸⁰

As election day approached, two impressions dominated newspaper coverage of the presidential election in Virginia. The turnout would break the record of 771,449 votes in the 1960 election, and Johnson was likely to carry the state by a narrow margin. Levin Nock Davis, secretary of the State Board of Elections, estimated that at least 175,000 new voters had registered since April, and he predicted that nearly one million votes would be cast on 3 November.⁸¹

Lyndon Johnson carried Virginia by the surprisingly large margin of 76,704 votes. The record turnout of 1,042,267 constituted 41.2 percent of the eligible adult population. The race was closer in the counties than in the cities. Johnson carried fifty-six of ninety-six counties, by 51.7 percent to 48.1 percent. The president lost only seven of Virginia's thirty-four cities and garnered 56.5 percent to Goldwater's 43.1 percent. Statewide, Johnson received 53.5 percent to Goldwater's 46.2 percent.⁸² Goldwater carried the Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth congressional districts; his margin of victory in the Third, Fifth, and Sixth districts, however, was much lower than Richard Nixon's in 1960. Even more

⁸⁰ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 Oct. 1964, p. 44; Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, 28 Oct. 1964, p. 5; *ibid.*, 30 Oct. 1964, p. 5; *ibid.*, 1 Nov. 1964, p. B-7; George M. Kelley, "The Last Hoopla," *ibid.*, p. B-5; *Richmond News Leader*, 30 Oct. 1964, p. 5.

⁸¹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 Oct. 1964, p. 1; George M. Kelley, "Va. Edges to Johnson," Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, 25 Oct. 1964, p. 1; James Latimer, "Narrow Johnson Victory Held Likely in Virginia," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 1 Nov. 1964, p. 1; *Lynchburg News*, 25 Oct. 1964, p. C-1.

⁸² The totals were as follows: counties, Johnson 331,679 and Goldwater 308,879; cities, Johnson 226,359 and Goldwater 172,455; statewide, Johnson 558,038 and Goldwater 481,334. See Eisenberg, *Virginia Votes*, pp. 237–40.

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A record turnout of 1,042,267 on 3 November gave Virginia's electoral votes to the Democratic contender for the first time since 1948. Statewide, Lyndon Johnson won 558,038 votes to Barry Goldwater's 481,334.

remarkable was Goldwater's loss in the Seventh District. The Shenandoah Valley, which had given overwhelming margins to Nixon, proved not as receptive to Goldwater. In the Valley the civil rights issue may actually have worked in favor of the Democrats because pietist religious groups such as the Brethren and Mennonites supported the legislation as just and in accordance with Christian principles.⁸³

⁸³ Ralph Eisenberg, "The 1964 Presidential Election in Virginia: A Political Omen?" *University of Virginia Newsletter* 41 (15 Apr. 1965): 29–31; Eisenberg, *Virginia Votes*, pp. 237–40; James Latimer, "State View Is Clouded By Vote," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 5 Nov. 1964, p. 1; George M. Kelley, "Crosswinds Strike Conservative Area," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 22 Oct. 1964,

Johnson's victory was based on his wide margin in the Tenth District (40,963), an area that had experienced significant population growth since 1960, as well as large margins in the Second (22,106) and Ninth districts (18,336). Black Virginians played an important role in his triumph. Political scientist Ralph Eisenberg accepted an estimate of "at least 160,000" black voters, whose support of Johnson was almost complete. In fifteen predominantly black precincts in Richmond, the president received 18,207 votes to 424 for Goldwater. The Jefferson Park precinct in Newport News was of one mind. Voters there cast all 1,325 ballots for Johnson. In Norfolk ten predominantly black precincts cast 10,819 of 11,130 votes for him. African Americans' support of Johnson was a portent of the political power that black Virginians would exercise in the future. Their voting strength would be essential to the rise of liberal Democrat Henry E. Howell, Jr., who was elected lieutenant governor in 1971 and narrowly lost the governorship in 1973. Unified black support was also indispensable to the success of L. Douglas Wilder, elected to the state Senate in 1969, the lieutenant governorship in 1985, and the governorship in 1989. As the first African American elected governor of an American state, Wilder represented a culmination of the black political awakening that began in Virginia in 1964.⁸⁴

Lyndon Johnson carried Virginia for several reasons. As the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported, many of the factors that affected the outcome nationally played a role in the Old Dominion. Goldwater's image of being dangerous on the nuclear issue and his inconsistent statements, especially on Social Security, were all substantial factors in the outcome. The prosperity of the times also played a part. There were, however, additional circumstances that affected Virginia specifically. The removal of the poll tax enabled new voters to participate. Without those votes Johnson would have lost the state. The Democrats also seem to have been successful in convincing some tobacco and peanut farmers that Goldwater would destroy the system of agricultural price supports. The favorable attitudes of Governor Albertis Harrison and Lieutenant

p. 1. The contrast between 1960 and 1964 in the Shenandoah Valley is especially evident in the returns from Rockingham County and the city of Waynesboro. In 1960 Nixon won 70.3 percent in Rockingham County, whereas Goldwater received only 49.7 percent in 1964. In Waynesboro Nixon gained 69.6 percent of the vote, but Goldwater received 46.5 percent.

⁸⁴ Eisenberg, *Virginia Votes*, pp. 237–40; Eisenberg, "The 1964 Presidential Election," pp. 31–32; Larry Sabato, *Virginia Votes, 1969–1974* (Charlottesville, 1976), p. 51; Larry Sabato, *Aftermath Of "Armageddon": An Analysis Of The 1973 Virginia Gubernatorial Election* (Charlottesville, 1975), pp. 65–67; Donald P. Baker, *Wilder: Hold Fast to Dreams* (Cabin John, Md., 1989), p. 80; Larry Sabato, *Virginia Votes, 1983–1986* (Charlottesville, 1987), p. 74; Larry Sabato, *Virginia Votes, 1987–1990* (Charlottesville, 1991), p. 80.

Governor Mills Godwin were important. Godwin has cited Kellam's effective campaign organization, which covered the state and brought Organization Democrats, straight-ticket Democrats, and black Virginians into a working coalition.⁸⁵

The 1964 presidential election was indeed a turning point in the Old Dominion. It revealed that black Virginians had for the first time in the twentieth century become a major voting bloc. Although the poll tax remained in effect for the 1965 state elections,⁸⁶ the implications of the black vote in 1964 were clear to the Organization. Watkins Abbitt saw the surge as "a warning to our people as to what to expect in the future."⁸⁷

In addition, the election revealed a deep split between pragmatists and ideologues in the Organization, a split that foreshadowed its demise in the late 1960s. Harrison, Godwin, and most Democrats in the legislature supported the Johnson-Humphrey ticket, but Byrd and congressmen Abbitt, Smith, and Tuck, as well as some Democratic state legislators, did not. The bitterness of some ultra-conservatives toward Harrison and Godwin affected their attitude toward the Organization in general. Six days after the election John W. Carter of Danville, chairman of the Virginia Conservative Council, denounced Godwin for supporting Johnson and promised that Godwin would face conservative opposition for the governorship. He believed that Kellam was "now running the show" in the Organization. Carter's statement clearly anticipated the founding of the Virginia Conservative party in July 1965. Godwin's support of Johnson, however, was a politically shrewd move that helped him win the backing of many straight-ticket Democrats in his quest for the governorship. Godwin, a Southside Democrat, was becoming more attuned to the changing needs of a state that was experiencing rapid population growth and urbanization. The Supreme Court had ruled in *Reynolds v. Sims* in June 1964 that both houses of a state legislature must be apportioned on a population basis. It was obvious that urban areas would exert more influence in the General Assembly in the future.⁸⁸

The days of the Byrd Organization were numbered. In addition to the defeats of Organization stalwarts in 1966, Harry Byrd, Sr., succumbed to a brain tumor in October. Neither Harry Byrd, Jr., nor Sidney Kellam aspired to the role of Organization leader. In 1969 candidates favored

⁸⁵ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 4 Nov. 1964, p. 18; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 5 Nov. 1964, p. 4; interview with Mills E. Godwin, Jr., 6 July 1993.

⁸⁶ The poll tax was banned as a prerequisite for voting in state elections in the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Harper v. State Board of Elections* in 1966.

⁸⁷ Watkins M. Abbitt to J. M. Piette, 2 Dec. 1964, Abbitt Papers.

⁸⁸ *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 10 Nov. 1964, p. 1; Wilkinson, *Harry Byrd*, p. 248.

by the Organization failed to win any of the three statewide offices in the Democratic primaries. Bitter factional divisions among liberal, moderate, and conservative Democrats made possible the election of A. Linwood Holton, Virginia's first Republican governor in the twentieth century.⁸⁹

Six months after the 1964 presidential election, political scientist Ralph Eisenberg wrote that "[t]he 1964 Presidential election may well be cited by future historians as a political milestone in Virginia."⁹⁰ Almost thirty years later, Eisenberg's words seem prophetic.

⁸⁹ Eisenberg, "Virginia: The Emergence of Two-Party Politics," pp. 74–80.

⁹⁰ Eisenberg, "The 1964 Presidential Election in Virginia," p. 29.